

# House Democratic Caucus



**BREAKING  
GROUND  
IN 2006**



## **Tax Relief for Residents and Businesses**

\$500 credit for residents on state income tax for property taxes paid on cars or home. Phase-out of property tax on manufacturing equipment, and elimination of corporate tax surcharge in 2007 for businesses.



## **Solving our Transportation Crisis**

‘**The Roadmap for Connecticut’s Economic Future**’ invests billions over the next decade to upgrade our aging transportation infrastructure.



## **Jobs = Economic Growth**

‘**Jobs For The 21st Century**’ provides tax breaks for manufacturers, targeted tax incentives for the film industry and employer job creation incentives.



## **Healthy Kids, Healthy Workers**

‘**Healthy Kids CT**’ legislation makes healthcare coverage more accessible to Connecticut’s children by removing obstacles that families had to navigate to enroll and keep children in HUSKY.



## **Improving Our Children’s Future**

‘**2020 Vision for Connecticut’s Children**’ requires at least 10% of dollars spent on children to be dedicated to preventative programs by 2020.

# 2006 End of Session Summary

May 3, 2006

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# The Budget

**No new taxes –  
tax cuts for residents and business**

- \$500 property tax credit
- Phase-out of manufacturing property tax
- No '07 corporate tax surcharge
- Tax credits for film & entertainment industry

## Investment in our future

- More municipal aid for schools, roads etc.
- Job creation & economic development
- HUSKY healthcare for more children
- Increased special education funding
- Fully fund teachers' pensions thru '07
- Pay down long term debt
- Deposits into Rainy Day Fund

**...and much more!**



# INTRODUCTION

Last year we unveiled our “Blueprint for Connecticut,” and in many ways we met and surpassed our goals.

At the beginning of this year we moved to the next stage of construction with “Breaking Ground,” our vision for the 2006 session. Tax relief, transportation, job growth, access to health care and our children’s futures were the next logical steps.

This was a 12-week session, one of the shortest on record. Our committees rolled up their sleeves and crafted legislation that was ready for debate and worthy of passage. 2006 was a year of creative and bold solutions.

## **Tax Relief and Budget**

It was a good news session on the tax front – no new taxes and tax cuts for residents and businesses. We were able to provide real tax relief for residents by increasing the property tax credit to \$500.

For businesses, our goal was to help foster a healthy business climate and job growth. We phase out the manufacturing property tax, eliminate the corporate tax surcharge for 2007 and create targeted tax credits for the film and entertainment industry.

The budget that we passed was done on time, under the spending cap and is an investment in Connecticut’s future. We provide more municipal aid for schools, roads, etc.; increase funding for special education; and invest in job creation and economic development.

We also invest in the future by fully funding the state teacher’s pension fund for the biennium, paying down long term debt and shoring up the Rainy Day Fund, all of which provide big savings for taxpayers in the long term.

## **Transportation**

Seizing a once-in-a-generation opportunity, we passed legislation that will invest billions over the next decade to overhaul Connecticut’s aging transportation infrastructure.

This is the single biggest thing we do for long-term job creation and economic development in Connecticut. *The Roadmap For Connecticut’s Economic Future* includes a myriad of highway and mass transit projects along, and extending from, Interstates 95, 91, 84 and 395 corridors. We achieved this package without tax increases and without tolls.

## **Jobs**

We adopted a comprehensive plan designed to spur job growth in Connecticut. Our package of tax credits, tax cuts, grants and training sends a strong message about our commitment to job growth.

The package includes targeted tax credits designed to entice business into the state from the film and entertainment industry. We worked closely with the film and media industry to develop incentives designed to make Connecticut a major player in attracting movie and television production.

## Health Care

We adopted legislation that will make health coverage more accessible to all of Connecticut's children by removing a number of obstacles that families previously had to navigate to enroll and keep children in HUSKY A and B.

## Children

Our '**2020 Vision for Connecticut's Children**' will re-direct state dollars spent on children away from crisis services and toward preventative programs for children.

According to the State Prevention Council's 2002 Prevention Services Funding report, only about 2% of state spending goes toward prevention. Our plan ups that to at least 10% by year 2020.

Thanks to our "Blueprint for Connecticut" and "Breaking Ground," Connecticut sets the stage for a solid foundation. We empowered our committees to think boldly and creatively. It paid off in the quality legislation that was debated and passed in the House this session.

# Improving the Futures of Our Children and Young People

## Recommendations of the Child Poverty Council Related to Job Training and Child Wellness

House leadership approved a program this session that seeks to match parents up with the vocational and educational skills needed to succeed in today's economy. Thanks to this legislation, parents with children who are eligible for, but not receiving, public assistance can receive the assistance they need to support their families by earning high school diplomas, GEDs, job training skills, and English as a second language classes.

HB 5251 - Passed both



## State Investment in Prevention and Child Poverty Reduction

One of the main priorities for House Democrats this session was enactment of a visionary new initiative to reform the way the state funds programs affecting children and youth. In 2001, the last time a study was conducted into state spending on this subject, it was discovered that the vast majority of state funds was spent reacting to childhood and youth crisis, too often intervening when it was already too late, instead of concentrating spending on prevention. The "2020 Vision" plan charts the state on a bold course toward fiscal realignment promoting investment in time-tested crisis prevention programs that have been proven successful. Examples of investment in prevention include: early education, school readiness, after school programs, health care and immunization, and vocational training opportunities. At the centerpiece of the legislation stands the spending goal of ten percent investment of the budget in crisis prevention by the year 2020. This landmark legislation puts the state on the vanguard of intelligent investment in our young people, the future of our nation, by realigning how it spends its funds.

SB 5254 – Passed both (House A)

## Youth Policy

This legislation establishes a seventeen-member Youth Futures Committee that is instructed to produce a progress report by January 1, 2008. The committee's mission involves several main priorities:

- Developing youth services delivery guidelines
- Streamlining agencies that administer programs serving youth
- Maximizing development of community-level services that assist in the achievement of the state's youth policy goals
- Collaborating with partnerships to facilitate positive youth outcomes

These outcomes include many important aims for our young people, such as improved school attendance, increased numbers in post-secondary education, skill-building employment programs and opportunities, safe and stable housing, and access to quality mental and physical health services. The outcome of the committee's work will not only save the state critical funds, but also promote the human dignity of each person.

HB 5532 – House both (House B)

## Healthy Kids



### **Promoting the Physical and Health Needs of Students**

Childhood obesity is a national epidemic raising significant concerns about the health, wellness, and physical activity of kids. The General Assembly seeks to address the health needs of Connecticut children and encourage exercise and physical activity at school. Through this legislation, boards of education across the state are encouraged to develop and coordinate programs to address the health and wellness of children. The plans follow guidelines involving strategies for engaging students in daily exercise while at school.

PA 06-44 (SB 204)

### **Providing Certain Adult Adopted Persons with Access to Information in Their Original Birth Certificate**

Under the current law, adult adoptees attempting to access the medical histories of their birth parents face a process that is limited, poorly documented, and insufficient. This legislation grants adoptees born in the State of Connecticut the right to access original birth certificates and documents, biological parent contact preference forms, and completed health history forms. Additionally, biological parents wishing to keep their identities private are given better protection by the creation of a contact preference form.

PA 06-71 (SB 4)

### **Autism Pilot Program**

The State of Connecticut currently provides little to no support services for adults with autism. House Bill 5471 will change that. HB 5471 requires the Department of Mental Retardation to establish an autism spectrum disorders pilot program. The program will provide services such as job skills, life skills coaching, and case management services for up to fifty autistic adults and their families.

SB 703 - Passed both (Senate A, B)

### **Developmental Needs of Children and Youth with Cancer**

HB 5114 requires the HUSKY plan to cover testing for cognitive and developmental development for children receiving chemotherapy and radiation treatment without prior authorization. Recent studies have shown that chemotherapy and radiation treatments may slow a child's developmental progress, but testing can assist the physician in altering the treatment. Passage of this bill ensures that children can more fully recover from cancer treatments at a young age.

HB 5114 – Passed both (House A)

## Healthy Kids Initiative

This year the General Assembly took strong measures to reduce barriers to health care for Connecticut's children. The institution of the self-declaration requirement will reduce onerous paperwork to make it easier for families to enroll, and stay enrolled, in the HUSKY program. The HUSKY population has steadily decreased as more and more families were forced to continually fill out paperwork to stay enrolled in HUSKY.

Also included in the legislation is a provision to study the feasibility of medical homes. The medical home concept is one that providers become a "home" for medical care. They take the responsibility for arranging supplemental services for children, i.e. making appointments with other specialists, etc. This method of providing care is thought to increase the quality of care and any follow through that is necessary.

Connecticut is leading the way in protecting children's health care. We passed a law which guarantees that children in our state's HUSKY A program will receive all necessary screening, diagnostic services, and treatment. Connecticut's law will assure that these vital services are available for our children, regardless of any changes on the federal level.

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)

## Access To Oral Health Care

For over the past decade, the state has experienced declining usage rates for children receiving dental care. The dental community had expressed concern with the reimbursement rate for these services as a reason to not provide services to the HUSKY population. HB 5790 increases the reimbursement rates for services to the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile of normal reimbursement rates to make it a business practicality to provide dental services to HUSKY children. It also adds a provision to have the Department of Social Services report back to the General Assembly in 2009 whether or not the increasing rates led to an increase in usage.

HB 5790 - [Although this bill was not taken up, the issue was addressed in the Department of Social Services and Department of Public Health implementer. DSS has been directed to offer to settle the lawsuit in the efforts that it will increase access to care.](#)

## Developmental Needs Of Children And Youth With Cancer

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HB 5114 - Passed both (House A)



# Jobs Foster Economic Growth

## Jobs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

With extraordinary potential to generate new job opportunities and spur economic growth, PA 06-83 puts Connecticut at the forefront of the emerging digital media industry, improves the business climate and increases Connecticut's competitiveness in today's global economy. This comprehensive economic development package offers a variety of tax incentives, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, and enhances coordination of policies. It includes:



### Film Industry Incentives

Offered as a welcome mat to the burgeoning media and film industry, the General Assembly created a production and wage tax credit to foster economic growth among homegrown Connecticut media companies and to incentivize new ones. A production credit is available for qualified film and digital media production, pre-production and post-production expenses incurred in the state and a wage credit is established for compensation paid to Connecticut residents for services on qualified productions.

### Manufacturing Machinery and Equipment Property Tax Exemption (MME)

PA 06-83 exempts all manufacturing machinery and equipment from local property taxes after a five year phase out and provides that towns will be reimbursed for any revenue loss. Long viewed as an impediment to growth, the end to the MME tax will help keep our manufacturers competitive.

### Research & Innovation

A strong economy depends on healthy, innovative small business growth. PA 06-83 provides a number of initiatives to encourage small business development and research. Initiatives include:

- Recruitment of eminent research faculty by UConn for accelerated applied research and development
- Creation of a Center for Entrepreneurship at UConn to train the next generation of entrepreneurs and inventors in commercialization
- Establishment of an intellectual property law clinic at the Center for Entrepreneurship
- Early stage venture capital through Connecticut Innovations to new or expanding businesses in the early stages of product development, including pre-seed, seed, start-up, first-stage and expansion financing
- A Small Business Incubator Program in DECD to provide assistance in business plan preparation, management counseling, and grants for operating costs to incubator facilities associated with small technology-based companies
- Micro-business matching grant to micro-businesses who receive federal funds under the Small Business Innovation Research or Business Technology transfer programs

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## **Incentives, Opportunities & Coordination**

SB 702 enhances Connecticut competitiveness through several additional initiatives. Among the things the bill accomplishes, it:

- Establishes the Office of the Business Advocate to assist small businesses access public and private business assistance programs and act as a business information clearinghouse
- Creates new loan forgiveness programs to encourage students to enter high demand fields
- Creates the "Engineering Connecticut" loan reimbursement targeted to new engineers who begin work in Connecticut after Dec. 31, 2005
- Creates the "You Belong" loan reimbursement for individuals with doctoral degrees who begin work in Connecticut in an "economically valuable field" after Dec. 31, 2005 and are employed by a company or university qualified by DECD
- Establishes two pilot programs targeted to middle and high school students who have not reached proficiency in math and science, and a third pilot "Generation Next" that connects high school students to business-sponsored job shadowing and provides externship opportunities for teachers at math, science or technology related Connecticut businesses

PA 06-83 (SB 702)

## **Digital Media and Motion Picture Development in the State**

The second piece of the film incentive package, SHB 5797, implements the new state film and digital media tax credits through the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCCT). It expands the CCCT's responsibilities to digital media in addition to film, and requires CCCT to market Connecticut as a place for film and digital media production and post-production, and to assist producers in securing all necessary permits for their activities in-state. Also, the bill expands the CCCT membership by six individuals with digital media or movie production experience, and requires the CCCT to report back to the General Assembly on the estimated economic impact of all production activities in-state.

SHB 5797 - Passed both (House A)

## **Enterprise Zone Reporting**

Providing improved accountability and effective performance evaluation measures, the General Assembly voted to revise the current seventeen enterprise zones' evaluation procedures and reporting in SHB 5438. It establishes deadlines for adopting goals and performance standards and enables the DECD Commissioner to recommend the removal of a zone's designation if performance outcomes are not met.

DECD is required to report on zone effectiveness every five years, while establishing a uniform format for zoned municipalities and details the data each must report to DECD to effectively evaluate performance. The data requirements include the amount invested in-job training, property, manufacturing machinery and equipment and personal property, and the number of full and part time jobs held in each enterprise zone.

SHB 5438 – Passed Both (Senate A)

## **Advancement of Nanotechnology Development in Connecticut**

Essential to expanding Connecticut's economy, sSB 408 encourages Connecticut students, universities and businesses to be at the forefront of the emerging industry of nanotechnology and promotes commercialization of academic research. By opening collaborative research and interdisciplinary opportunities between academia and business, sSB 408's initiatives will help to elevate Connecticut as a nanotechnology industry leader.

sSB 408 expands the Office of Workforce Competitiveness' nanotechnology initiatives. It provides new matching grants to support graduate and postdoctoral students in pursuing nanotechnology research (discovery grants), university teams working with industry for specific application development (collaborative grants), and universities and businesses to demonstrate prototype functionality and cost-effectiveness of the application (prototype grants).

In addition, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness must study the feasibility of developing a Connecticut Center for Nanoscale Sciences and Development and develop a business planning model that leads to the center's establishment. Finally, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness must provide technical assistance to businesses that apply for nanotechnology-related Small Business Innovation Research funds.

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)

## **Eligibility for the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit**

Fulfilling this session's goal of fostering job creation, sHB 5023 fosters skilled job opportunities by expanding the apprenticeship training tax credit to both union and open shop four-year training programs. With a current shortage in skilled workers in the construction trades, expansion of this tax credit is critical to creating a stable pool of highly skilled tradesmen. The tax credit is only available once per apprenticeship at the completion of a four-year program, and is worth either \$4,000 or 50% of the actual wages paid over the four years.

sHB 5023 - Passed both (House A)

## **Social Security Offsets Under the Worker's Compensation System**

The General Assembly took action this session to provide fairness and protection to one of the most vulnerable groups in Connecticut: working people over the age of 65. Prior to passage of this legislation, injured workers eligible for workers' compensation had their Social Security retirement benefit deducted from the benefit. The offset was harmful to a population of senior citizens who, in most cases, are in the workplace because their Social Security benefits are insufficient to sustain a living. Because of this legislation, a senior citizen injured on the job would be eligible for their rightful workers' compensation benefits rather than being left to fall through the cracks.

SB 25 - Passed both

# Preserving Our Environment, Safeguarding Our Future



## Brownfields

Connecticut's cities and industrialized regions are crammed with brownfields, economically underutilized property due to blight or contamination, which impede sustainable economic development and growth of local tax bases. sHB 5685 eliminates barriers to remediation and re-development by streamlining access to resources, information, technical assistance and funds for potential property owners.

The bill provides the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) with much needed tools to promote brownfield cleanup activities, streamline current policies and procedures, gather data to evaluate potential sites and foster interagency cooperation. The creation of the one-stop Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development will help municipalities identify, remediate and redevelop contaminated sites.

In addition, the bill:

- Requires implementation of a pilot program that designates four towns with brownfields to receive clean-up assistance for beneficial projects
- Expands the Urban and Industrial Sites Reinvestment Program for brownfields clean-up
- Creates incentives for cleaning up contaminated properties
- Establishes a task force to develop long term solutions and identify best practices and additional funding for brownfields clean-up and re-development

sHB 5685 - Passed both (House A)

## Encroachment on Open Space Lands

Open space is preserved in order to safeguard Connecticut's rural heritage from its susceptibility to development and despoilment of the land. The bill addresses the serious problem of persons who encroach upon open space by installing buildings, driveways, and even swimming pools. This bill protects the noble intention established under the land trust by authorizing anyone with property interest to bring action against the violator.

HB 5447 - Passed both

## Pollution Notification

People who are working or living in or around a contaminated property have a right to know. HB 5440 requires a seller of a property to disclose any knowledge of well water contamination before selling. HB 5440 also requires the Department of Environmental Protection, when it is notified that a property is contaminated, to share this information with the Department of Labor and with any employee's representative who has requested notification. This will help to protect laborers who are working on contaminated work sites.

PA 06-81 (HB 5440)

## **Pilot Program to Evaluate Shoreline Erosion**

In order to revive and protect the natural beauty of our coastline, along with promoting tourism and job creation, this bill will use \$450,000 to fund a pilot program to reverse the effects of beach erosion. The technology has been used most successfully in several places around the world as well as here in United States. The cities of Milford and Fairfield are the proposed test areas for this technology since they are the two Connecticut towns with the most "critical" beach erosion according to the Surfrider Foundation.

HB 5803 - Passed both

## **Restoration of the Lobster Stock and Industry**

In an effort to reverse the massive die-off of lobsters that started in 1999, the General Assembly passed legislation to assist in the re-growing of the lobster stock and provide relief to the individual lobstermen. An advisory committee will be formed to advise the Department of Environment Protection on enacting a V-Notch preservation of lobsters program, pending approval of a federal commission to receive the \$1 million appropriation. If the federal commission does not approve the V-Notch program, then \$600 million of the appropriated funds will go towards a pot buy-back program and \$400 million of the appropriated funds go towards funding direct aid to the lobstermen.

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)

## **Removal of Abandoned Sunken Vessels**

Connecticut has enacted a law which will create cleaner waters and safer waterways by bringing boat usage and ownership responsibilities on par with those of motor vehicle operators. This bill will allow harbormasters to determine whether vessels have been abandoned or left derelict. From this determination, the harbormaster and either the Transportation commissioner or an authorized municipal representative can have the boat removed and stored, with the costs being assessed to the last registered owner of the vessel. The bill also allows the official who caused the vessel's removal to sell the vessel after a specified period of time.

HB 5658 - Passed both (House A)

## **Appointment of Special Conservation Officers**

In order to better protect Connecticut's environment, a law has been enacted to allow for the appointment of special conservation officers or patrolmen. The appointed officers will be selected from employees of the Department of Environmental Protection. Additional appointments can also be made from sworn federal law enforcement officers of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service, although these individuals will not be considered state employees. The enforcement agent may enforce boating laws within their jurisdiction as long as they are not state employees and have completed a police training course.

PA 06-70 (HB 5750)

## **Clean Cars**

In an effort to curb the harmful rise of noxious greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from motor vehicles, this legislation implements a GHG labeling program for new vehicles sold or leased for the 2009 model year and later. The Department of Environmental Protection commissioner must create a GHG labeling program, which will contain the GHG score comparing that vehicle's GHG emissions with those of other vehicle models of the same model year, the average GHG score within the same vehicle class, and any other relevant information as determined by DEP. The bill prohibits the sale or lease of a 2009 or later model year motor vehicle without a GHG emissions label. Cars are rated on a scale of 0 to 10, whereby 10 represents the lowest amount of GHG emitted. The average GHG score for 2006 is 5. This measure is a major step toward the state's goals of lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

SB 660 - Passed both (Senate A, B)

# Protecting Consumers from Fraud and Abuse



## Truth in Music Advertising

This legislation targets false advertising schemes employed by bogus musical or singing groups capitalizing on the names of recognizable bands by making it unlawful for any person or group to advertise a false, deceptive, or misleading affiliation with a recognizable performing or recording group. Not only do these practices take money out of the pockets of bona fide artists, but it also dupes audiences into purchasing a counterfeit product. This legislation protects the consumer and artist from unfair and deceptive trade practices.

PA 06-16 (HB 5801)

The legislature passed several bills to protect the citizens of Connecticut from Consumer Fraud and Identity Theft. Some of these bills will:

- Protect purchasers of prepaid funeral contracts through escrow accounts and notification of a change in ownership or closing of a funeral home  
HB 5181 - Passed both
- Protect consumers from sellers of air bags that do not meet the federal safety standards  
PA 06-25 (HB 5182)
- Ensure that both member and non-member prices for gas are similarly posted  
PA 06-29 (HB 5558)
- Protects consumers from having their telephone records sold, obtained or received without their consent  
HB 5669 - Passed both
- Make it illegal to obtain the information on the electronic strip of a credit card or transfer that information to another card without the permission of the owner  
PA 06-60 (HB 5694)
- Make it illegal to send email messages with the intent to solicit information such as Social Security numbers or bank account information by pretending to be an online business  
PA 06-50 (SB 566)
- Require home heating oil and propane suppliers to fully disclose in writing all of the purchaser's costs  
PA 06-65 (SB 391)

## Prepaid Funeral Contracts

This bill establishes a system for setting up an escrow account for payments made and requires that relevant information be obtained and recorded in a contract. These contracts would outline the goods and services and the amount prepaid. Also, funeral homes would have to keep a record of these contracts and notify the purchaser of any changes in ownership or the closing of the funeral home.

HB 5181 - Passed both



## **Fake Air Bags For Motor Vehicles**

This legislation makes it a Class A misdemeanor with a punishment of up to one year in prison or \$2,000 fine or both for each offense for selling or offering to sell an air bag that the seller knows or should reasonably know does not meet the federal safety standards. This legislation goes above the current Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act (CUTPA) and allows the affected parties to sue.

PA 06-25 (HB 5182)

## **Posting Of Gas Prices**

The General Assembly passed legislation which requires that both member and non-member prices be posted using the same size on signs advertising the price. It also requires that all prices such as full-serve, mini-serve and self-serve are clearly visible at the pump. This protects consumers from being misled about the price of gas prior to filling their tank or waiting in line to purchase gas.

PA 06-29 (HB 5558)

## **Confidentiality Of Telephone Records**

This legislation protects consumers from having their telephone records sold, obtained or received without their consent. The bill also establishes fines for violation.

HB 5669 - Passed both

## **Identity Theft And Theft Of Personal Information**

This legislation makes it illegal to obtain the information on the electronic strip of a credit card without the permission of the owner. It also makes it illegal to use an encoder to take the information off a credit card and put it onto a different card with the intent of defrauding the owner. This legislation gives the Attorney General the ability to prosecute for up to 10 years in prison, a \$10,000 fine or both. It also makes it illegal to possess the items with the intent to violate the law and carries a penalty of one year in prison or a \$2,000 fine or both.

PA 06-60 (HB 5694)

## **Electronic Mail Message Phishing**

This legislation makes it a Class D felony to send email messages with the intent to solicit information such as Social Security numbers or bank account information by pretending to be an online business.

PA 06-50 (SB 566)

# Success and Prosperity in the 21st Century Begins in the Classroom



## Healthy Food and Beverages in Schools

With increasing attention to the problem of childhood obesity, the Healthy Schools Initiative was passed to reinforce healthy eating habits at schools. The toughest law in the nation, SB 373 bans the sale of soda and sugary beverages and incentives schools to offer healthy food and snacks for purchase by students.

Another tool to provide for the nutritional health for our school children, the bill restricts the types of beverages sold in school at school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias and fundraising activities on school grounds. It requires the Department of Education to establish nutritional standards for food sold to students in school while providing a financial incentive to public schools who choose healthy foods and snacks. For each lunch served that meets these standards in the prior school year, the school will receive a 10-cent bonus in the state match to the National School Lunch Program.

With nine million overweight children nationwide, providing nutritious choices to our students is essential to providing them with healthy futures.

PA 06-03 (SB 373)

## Charter Schools

Charter schools provide a number of Connecticut students with excellent educational opportunities. Highly acclaimed for their record of raising academic achievement, charter schools can now expand their enrollment from 250 to 300 students under this bill. In addition, upon the approval of the State Board of Education, charter schools with a strong academic record can enroll up to 85 students per grade if within available appropriations. sSB 637 permits charter schools to expand to serve even more students.

PA 06-55 (sSB 637)

## Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians

In an effort to reduce the incidence of bullying among school children, the General Assembly passed sHB 5563. It expands the definition of bullying to include incidents of harassment that occur on the school bus and strengthens local policies to enable students to report bullying acts anonymously. Also, the bill requires that local policy offer case-by-case interventions, which may include counseling and disciplinary action to students who repeatedly bully and students who are frequently bullied. If bullying occurs off school grounds but has a negative effect on a student's safety and academic performance, local policies may now include provisions to address that situation. Finally, the bill increases parental notification of bullying incidents.

sHB 5563 - Passed both

## **Textbook Accountability**

Faced with purchasing textbooks well over \$100 each in college bookstores, students shoulder a burgeoning financial burden and choose to forgo required texts. Over the past two decades, college textbook prices increased at twice the rate of inflation. Troubled by the skyrocketing cost of textbooks, the General Assembly passed SHB 5527 to provide a level of relief.

SHB 5527 requires textbook publishers to provide additional information to Connecticut university and college faculty, such as the purchase price of the book or book packaged with supplemental materials at the college bookstore and the history of product revisions in order to assist them in decisions on required textbooks. In addition, the bill permits the use of student financial aid for purchasing textbooks at campus bookstores before the receipt of the aid or enables the colleges to make the financial aid available to eligible students prior to the first day of the academic term.

SHB 5527 - Passed both (House A)

## **Minor Revisions of the Education Statutes**

Enhancing quality teaching and administration in Connecticut schools, HB 5758 makes a number of changes to the education statutes.

Included are revisions to:

- Allow Teach for America teachers to be eligible to teach in Bridgeport, New Haven and Hartford schools
- Foster greater use of joint bulk purchasing of goods and services by regional or local boards of education by enabling the Department of Education to reward grant applicants with special consideration, if cooperative purchasing of instructional or testing materials or food or food services is indicated in the application via the regional educational service centers or joint purchasing agreements among multiple boards of education
- Encourage quality in afterschool programs by requiring the Department of Education to evaluate afterschool program grant recipients' effectiveness

SHB 5758 - Passed both (House A)

# **A Study of State Educational Institutions and Departments with Respect to the Expenditures of Such Institutions and Departments and The Programs Administered or Services Provided by Such Institutions and Departments**

(Education Budget Implementer)

## **Priority School Districts & School Readiness Expansion**

Focusing dollars where the need is greatest, the General Assembly voted to allocate an additional \$6 million among the priority school districts, and to create 1000 new School Readiness slots to Bridgeport, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham (ERG I towns).

## **Assistance to Interdistrict Magnet Schools**

On the recommendation of the Magnet School Task Force, the General Assembly raised the maximum state grant for magnet school transportation to \$1,300 per student. In addition, Regional Educational Service Centers are permitted to provide summer school programs to magnet school students and supplemental grants to interdistrict magnet schools if there are unused charter school funds.

## **Early Reading Intervention Enhancements**

Furthering the state's commitment to reducing the achievement gap, HB 5847 enhances intensive remedial assistance for elementary school students through personal reading plans and strengthens school requirements to improve students' reading levels. It shifts the policy focus to grades 1-3 reading students to help detect and resolve problems students may face. Early intervention reading programs grant applicants must include onsite teacher training and coaching provisions in their application, and each recipient district must report to the State Department of Education on its progress, applying professional development and teacher coaching in reducing the reading achievement gap. Finally, it enables the State Department of Education to hire a reading consultant to coordinate early intervention reading programs, training and professional development, and ensure quality in program delivery.

## **Nutritious School Breakfast Pilot**

In an effort to provide students with a healthy start to the school day, this bill establishes a pilot program that provides competitive grants to the 10 severe-need schools to help start up a school breakfast program. Eligible schools must include in their application the number of students who will now receive a nutritious breakfast.

## **Connecticut Grown Food in Schools**

An additional initiative to encourage students to eat well, the General Assembly voted to create a farm-to-school program to promote the sale of Connecticut Grown farm products to school districts by the Department of Agriculture in consultation with the State Department of Education (SDE). Also, it launches a Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week to support Connecticut agriculture and foods via school meal and classroom programs. This weeklong promotional event will be complemented by SDE's efforts to encourage school districts to purchase Connecticut Grown products, and will provide an opportunity for interaction between students and farmers.

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## **Higher Education Endowment Matching Funds**

Renewing the state's commitment to higher education, HB 5847 restores the 50% match of private donations to our state colleges and universities for the period of January 1 to June 30, 2005. The state funds match donations for endowed chairs, scholarships and program enhancements.

## **Additional Education Initiatives**

- Extends in-state tuition to A Better Chance out-of-state minority students who attend and graduate from a Connecticut Public High School
- Ensures preschool quality and kindergarten success through the collection and evaluation of student data and requiring program accreditation
- Establishes two new alternative routes to certification programs for school administrators and superintendents and provides for early childhood teachers cross-endorsement
- Increases the number of youth services bureaus eligible for a state match

HB 5847 - Passed both (House A)

## **Parental Involvement Reporting in School Profiles**

This bill raises awareness about the importance of parental engagement in the child's education and involvement in the school. Superintendents are required under this legislation to include parental involvement in the strategic school profiles reports that are submitted to local boards of education each year. In addition, the profile will report on the progress the district has made to engage parents in the student's education, both at school and home. Inclusion in the school system will better inform parents of potential learning disabilities or academic struggles and, as a result, produce deep and long-lasting positive effects on the child's education.

HB 5513 - Passed both

# Running Government with Greater Efficiency and Accountability



## The Bonding Process

In an effort to increase transparency and accountability in the bonding process, HB 5814 makes several changes to enhance openness in the Bond Commission process. First, it requires meeting agendas to be distributed to commission members five days, instead four, before a meeting. In addition, it requires that the full completed cost of the project or the item's purpose upon completion, plus its estimated operating cost on completion, be provided to commission members. Finally, it directs the OPM secretary to annually file a report updating all outstanding bond allocations with the complete project cost or purpose and anticipated operating costs as above.

In addition, the bill modifies a number of statutes that:

- Directs the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority to provide loans not less than \$2 million for mobile manufactured homes purchase
- Requires Department of Revenue Services to provide the Office of Fiscal Analysis with any necessary return information to assist in revenue estimating and forecasting
- Makes minor, technical changes to the gift and estate tax overpayments, appeals and minimum penalties
- Permits the City of Derby to establish a special taxing district for downtown revitalization
- Eliminates tobacco products retailers' requirement for two licenses
- Allows the DRS Commissioner to use an electronic signature on tax lien certificates

HB 5814 - Passed both (House A)

## Construction Oversight at the University of Connecticut

In light of a number of construction mismanagement and code compliance violations that jeopardized students' safety at the University of Connecticut, the General Assembly voted to reform construction practices and improve independent oversight and accountability of UConn 2000 projects. The bill:

- Requires an annual audit of UConn 2000 projects by independent auditors
- Establishes an Oversight Committee to supervise UConn's construction policies and procedures; review projects for contract, building and fire code compliance; and authorize and review any contract changes. Committee members must have expertise in construction management, project management and architectural design
- Creates a Construction Assurance Office to review construction performance
- Makes all UConn 2000 projects subject to Department of Public Works' and Department of Administrative Services' public bidding and contractor prequalification requirements and procedures for projects over \$500,000
- Requires UConn, with the Department of Public Safety, to enforce fire and building code compliance
- Compels UConn to use all dedicated funds for deferred maintenance for that purpose and identify future maintenance needs and costs
- Expands current Department of Administrative Services prequalification to substantial sub-contractors before work is performed on a state or municipal construction contract valued at more than \$500,000, and thus further enhance accountability measures in state contracting

sHB 5695 - Passed both (House A, B)

## **Luminaires at State Agencies**

Broadening our current law on light pollution, HB 5051 furthers Connecticut's effort to reclaim our night skies from excessive and wasteful lighting. Protecting our nighttime environment through quality outdoor lighting, HB 5051 prohibits the use of state funds for the replacement or installation of outdoor lights on state buildings and grounds that fail to maximize energy conservation or minimize light pollution, glare and light trespass, or restrict the brilliance of a light source. This initiative will help to minimize energy waste, saving state dollars in the long-term and improving visibility for our citizens.

HB 5051 – Passed both (House A, B)

## **Court Operations**

This legislation makes various changes to operations of the Judicial Branch, one of which puts limits on the use of senior justices on the Supreme Court. Under current law, chief justices can appoint an alternate judge, such as a retired senior justice, to a case even when one of the sitting Supreme Court justices is available. This legislation is designed to prevent chief justices from hand-picking alternate justices in order to stack the court for the purposes of ensuring the specific outcome of a case.

SB 156 - Passed both (House A, B) (Senate A)

## **Freedom of the Press**

This year, Connecticut joined 31 other states in taking the important step of protecting and preserving First Amendment rights. This bill shields the press from government coercion by prohibiting judicial, executive, legislative, and other bodies with subpoena-issuing power the right to compel members of the news media to testify about, produce, or disclose confidential sources. This legislation, which ranks among the toughest in the nation, will allow Connecticut's news media to function independently without fear of government coercion or reprisal.

HB 5212 - Passed both (House A, Senate B)

## **Office of Property Rights Ombudsman**

Heated debate on the subject of eminent domain swept across the nation, producing a serious need for the establishment of this office as the state weighs its options of this highly controversial issue. This office will develop expertise in law governing eminent domain by advising property owners, assessing government actions, informing the public, mediating for arbitration if requested, and recommending changes to the legislature. Passage of this legislation will ensure an informed office exists as the state reforms its eminent domain policy.

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)



## **The Severability of the Provisions of the Campaign Finance Reform Legislation**

A last minute, bi-partisan compromise, sSB 66 closes multiple loopholes in both Connecticut's new campaign finance law (PA 05-5) and the ethics laws. Last December's campaign finance reform and public financing bill is amended to:

- Include "PAC Caps" on organizational expenditures made by party, legislative caucus and leadership committees on behalf of a participating candidate;
- Eliminate the 72 hour non-severability trigger that otherwise makes the law inoperable;
- Enable minor party candidates to petition for public financing eligibility, fundraise accordingly, and qualify for supplemental grants if certain criteria is met; and,
- Limit non-participating candidates' with surplus campaign funds to donate those funds to either a charitable organization or the Citizens Election Fund.

In addition, several technical changes are made with regard to severability and the responsibilities of the State Elections Enforcement Commission.

Also, sSB 66 clarifies and strengthens the State's ethics laws. Under current law, a former Governor cannot accept employment as a lobbyist for one year after leaving office; this bill extends this one year prohibition of employment to any business that received a state contract during that Governor's term of office. Finally, it prohibits the Governors spouse, when acting in official capacity, from accepting an honorarium or fee for any article written or appearance, speech or participation at an event.

sSB 66 - Passed both (Senate A)



# Promoting Public Safety and Fostering Healthy Communities



## Interagency Task Force on Trafficking in Persons

This bill follows up on 2004 legislation that took major steps to re-search the extent of trafficking in Connecticut and proposes solutions to what has become one of the fastest growing crimes in the world. According to the US Department of State, as many as 18,000 people are trafficked in the US each year. This year's legislation authorizes victims to sue their traffickers and empowers the Attorney General to sue employers who knowingly employ and exploit victims. This bill adds Connecticut to the growing number of states addressing this insidious crime.

PA 06-43 (SB 153)

## Sexual Assault

The General Assembly took action to address circumstances surrounding a case of sexual assault committed against a college student that exposed a major weakness in state statutes. To provide total clarity regarding the penalties visited upon guilty parties and close all loopholes in statutes, the definition of "intimate parts" was expanded to include bodily fluids. This provides additional protection to victims of sexual assault.

PA 06-11 (SB 439)

## Megan's Law

Eleven years ago, Connecticut passed landmark legislation that created one of the nation's first sex offender registries. This legislation has come to be known as Megan's Law and seeks to provide every possible protection for our children from sexual predators. This session, the legislature has enhanced these protections by:

- Increasing the number of probation and parole officers who monitor sex offenders
- Improving the online registry by including the sex offender's most recent photo, contact information for a sex offender's parole and probation officers, and an improved description of the offense
- Creating a Risk Assessment Team which will review the files of all offenders, identify the risk posed by each sex offender, and then make recommendations as to what steps should be taken to further protect the public from the offender
- Requiring registration of sex offenders before they are released from prison
- Improving name and address change notification procedures

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)

## **Regulation of Hypnotists**

In recent years, several Connecticut women have been sexually assaulted by hypnotists. HBI 5671 prohibits a hypnotist from taking advantage of the trusting relationship created in a therapy session and thereby having a sexual relationship with a client. HB 5671 also requires everyone who practices hypnosis to register with the Department of Consumer Protection and permits the Department to impose a \$100 civil penalty on any individual who practices hypnosis without registering. In addition, the Department will deny registration to any applicant who has been required to register as a sex offender in the State of Connecticut.

HB 5846 - Passed both (House A, B)

## **Underage Drinking**

Responsible parents work hard to raise responsible young people who abstain from alcohol. Passage of this legislation makes their jobs easier. Adults will be prohibited from supplying drinks with alcohol to minors or permitting minors to possess alcohol. Prior to enactment of this legislation, it was only illegal for minors to possess alcohol in public.

HB 5211 - Passed both (House A)

# Creating a World-Class Health Care System in Connecticut



## **Supervision of Physician Assistants**

HB 5477 revises the requirements for supervision of physician assistants in hospital settings. This bill strengthens the supervision of physician assistants by ensuring that the supervisions are active and direct, thereby increasing the quality of care that the physician assistant provides.

HB 5477 – Passed both (House A)

## **Kidney Disease**

This bill goes far in establishing a method to screen for and diagnose kidney disease. HB 5616 requires, when the serum creatinine test is being done during an annual physical or during admission to a hospital, a calculation of the Glomerular Filtration Rate (GFR). The GFR can indicate if a person's kidneys are functioning properly. A physician can then determine if additional tests should be recommended or if a patient is at risk for kidney disease.

HB 5616 – Passed both (House A)

## **Establishing Maximum Out-Of-Pocket Expenses for Radiology Services and Designating the Month of November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month**

SB 311 designates November as Lung Cancer Awareness month. Lung cancer is one of the leading causes of death among men and women. Since there is no reliable screening for lung cancer, education is the best means to raise awareness of the disease.

This bill, as amended, includes a provision to direct the Stem Cell Research Advisory Committee to study the feasibility of establishing a public umbilical cord blood bank. Umbilical cord blood is an excellent source of stem cells and can be used in the stem cell research in the state.

pa 06-77 (SB 311)

## **Hospital Acquired Infections**

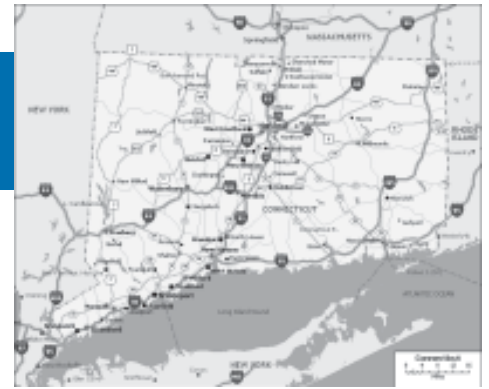
In response to the concerns of the residents of the state, the General Assembly formed a Committee on Healthcare Associated Infections. This committee will advise the Department of Public Health on developing a mandatory reporting system for hospital associated infections. This will go far in increasing patient safety during hospital stays by holding hospitals accountable for the spread of disease.

SB 160 - Passed both (Senate A)

# Improving Our Roads: The Pathway to a More Prosperous Connecticut

## Roadmap for Connecticut's Economic Future

HB 5844 is the next step to upgrade Connecticut's transportation infrastructure through strategic investments to reduce congestion statewide, enhance transit and interconnectivity and encourage economic growth.



Building on last year's initiative, HB 5844:

- provides a \$2.5 billion balanced, multimodal package that increases accountability in the transportation planning process
- improves coordination and planning across state agencies
- fosters greater communication among our neighboring states to address regional freight and commuter mobility needs
- increases the importance of transportation planning as essential to our state's future through a revised Transportation Strategy Board strategy that includes the prioritization of projects

The bill authorizes a number of projects across the state including (not all inclusive):

- the New Haven to Hartford to Springfield commuter rail with a link to Bradley International Airport
- the New Britain to Hartford busway
- capital enhancements to the branch lines, the New Haven line, and Shoreline East to foster increased ridership on transit
- funds for the next steps towards expansion along I-95 east of Branford and I-84 west of Waterbury
- funds to study mobility issues in Eastern Connecticut, the completion of the Norwich Intermodal HUB, and the Southeast Area Transit federal circulator bus pilot program
- funds for new train stations for Orange and West Haven on the New Haven line,
- implementation study of a commuter rail line between New London and Worcester
- an evaluation and plan by the DOT Commissioner for the implementation of the Route 2/2a improvements in Preston, North Stonington and Montville, the Pequot Bridge upgrade in Montville and Route 9 expansion
- the use of Urban Act dollars for transit oriented development projects – a step towards improved coordination and planning between transit and economic growth by encouraging mixed use development around transit stations

## Transportation Strategy Board (TSB)

Under this bill, the TSB must provide a revised strategy with prioritized projects, estimates of operating and capital costs for planned projects and a timeline for implementation by January 2007. And, each following year, the TSB and the OPM Secretary must provide a status report on implementation of the revised strategy. In addition, the OPM Secretary now will have additional responsibilities to provide greater coordination and communication across agencies and provide staffing to the TSB in an effort to better facilitate this advisory board to address Connecticut's transportation and economic development challenges in a holistic manner.

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## **Financing**

HB 5844 authorizes an additional \$1 billion in special obligation bonds (revenue bonds) from the Special Transportation Fund (STF) and up to \$1.3 billion in GARVEE bonds. The \$1 billion in special obligation bonds is supported by the increased transfer of revenue from the gross receipts tax on petroleum products into the STF. The \$1.3 billion bonding by GARVEE bonds is secured through future federal highway funds.

HB 5844 - Passed both (House A)

## Supporting the Well-Being of Our Seniors, Veterans, and Disabled Citizens



### **Rates for Nursing Pool Services Provided To Health Care Institutions**

Due to the nursing shortage in the state, the Department of Social Services regularly has to use nursing pool services to fill open positions in health care and correctional institutions. This bill caps the price, at a fair rate, for DSS to contract for nurses. The pool service would have a hearing process if it believed the rates were unfair for the services provided. This provision will save the state money and ensure quality of care for the patients.

HB 5093 – Passed both (House A)

### **Lowering of the Flag**

Currently, federal law provides that a governor may proclaim the national flag be flown at half-staff to honor the death of any official of that state or of the federal government. However, there is no specific mention in federal statute of lowering the national flag to honor fallen veterans. This legislation clearly articulates Connecticut state policy whenever the Governor orders the national flag to be lowered in honor of a fallen veteran. It provides a simple, yet honorable, way for the State of Connecticut to pay respects to fallen members of the military by giving the Governor the ability to lower both the state and national flags in their memory.

SB 170 - Passed both

## **Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption**

This bill excludes veterans' disability payments when determining income for purposes of income-based property tax exemptions for veterans, the blind, and people with total disabilities. State-mandated exemptions are granted through two statutes; one requires towns to give all qualified applicants a basic \$1,000 property tax exemption, and the other requires towns to give veterans who get the basic exemption an additional exemption, the amount of which depends on their income. This legislation excludes the disability payments as a source of income when determining these exemptions. It also requires towns to give a \$1,000 property tax exemption to people who are totally disabled and people who are blind.

SB 169 – Passed both (House A)

## **Departments of Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health and Addictive Services and Children and Families Implementer**

### **Nursing Homes**

- Nursing home rates will increase by 3%
- When the Department of Social Services considers interim rate increases, it must consider the facility's ability to meet wage and benefits costs in addition to existing factors. It also eliminates the prohibition against considering the facility's immediate profitability

### **Expansion of State-Funded Elderly PCA Pilot**

This successful pilot program will be expanded from 150 to 250. This program allows seniors to hire their own attendant instead of going through a home health agency.

### **Medicare Part D**

In continued response to the deficiencies of the federal Medicare Part D Program, House Democrats has set up a process to provide additional services to the state's seniors.

- Provide funding for nonformulary drugs if it is medically necessary
- Pay claims for prescription drugs for dually eligible clients who are denied coverage because the drug is not on the plan's formulary.

### **Long Term Care Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

A new long term care comprehensive needs assessment will be done by the Commission on Aging. The assessment will determine the unmet long term needs and will project future demands for services.

SB 703 - Passed both (Senate A, B)